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REVIEWS.

Génesis del Crimen en México. By JULIO GUERRERO. Paris and Mexico: Ch. Bouret, 1901. Pp. xiv + 394, 16mo.

NO RECENT Mexican work along sociological lines has more importance than Julio Guerrero's *Génesis del Crimen en México*—"Origin of Crime in Mexico." The name is hardly appropriate. The book is less a study of the origin of crime in Mexico than an analysis of the whole Mexican society, and an effort to find the physical and social influences that have shaped it. The volume is divided into five books, dealing with: I, "The Atmosphere;" II, "The Territory;" III, "Citadism;" IV, "Atavisms;" V, "Creeds." In the first and second of these an effort is made to refer some features in Mexican character to climatic conditions and some facts in Mexican history to topography. In both these discussions startling suggestions are made; and although the reader may not follow the author to all his conclusions, he is given matter for serious thought. A quotation will illustrate Guerrero's style and mode of thought, as well as the impossibility of always accepting his conclusions:

This atmosphere, pure and luminous, full of slumberous breezes in the shade and of debilitating heat in the sunshine, capricious and treacherous, not only has an influence upon the physiology, pathology, and life of the Mexicans, but it gives to much of their labor an unstable character. In fact, as permanent rivers are few in those great plains, and as those which exist are due to rain, the sowings of the rainy season, which are the more important, and their fruition, where there are no rivers, demand rains. But since, on the other hand, deforestation, carried on since before the vice-reinal days, has been destructive, not only are lacking forests and groups of trees, which, as thermal centers uniformly distributed over the higher plateau, might give shelter to the sowings against the chill of night and early morning, or which, in the guise of fences of foliage, might intercept the cold blasts of northerners; but also, through their lack, rains have become rare and irregular, there being regions where they have failed for six, seven, and eight consecutive years; as happened in the Mezquital of the state of Hidalgo, the llano district of Chihuahua, and the north of the state of Nuevo Leon in the years 1887 to 1895. In 1892 and 1893 the drought was general and desolated a great part of the Central Plateau.

When the season of rains arrives, the fields are transformed in a single

week, and where was a barren and arid horizon, there extends itself a mantle of tender verdure with corn-fields and springing wheat, which from day to day develop, open their spikes to the sun, and seem to cast back to it its last rays, as golden oceans, ruffled by the evening breeze. The laborers busy themselves in guarding them; but an unseasonable hailstorm destroys them, or a blast, sudden and nocturnal, from the north freezes them in the very months of August and September; that is to say, when surrounded by summer haze, or under a cloud sprinkled with twinkling stars, the laborers believe their crops secure and slumber, lulled by the most pleasing anticipations. When they wake the corn is lost; in twenty-four hours they pass from wealth to misery; the herd perishes; field labor stops; the laborers go forth to rob on the highways, to swell the ranks of the insurgents, or to beg on the street, according to the character of the government. Before the days of the railroads, droughts were the cause of local insurrections, which today are impossible, because grain may be transported from one district to another—or even to the whole country from a foreign land, as happened in 1894, when \$30,000,000 worth of American maize was imported. However, the evil is not easily remediable, and a general drought, or a series of local dry seasons, might, as Búlness indicates, mortally wound our nascent nationality. Agriculture then, thanks to the droughts of the fields on the one hand, but to the abrupt atmospheric changes on the other, escapes calculation and prevision; and there are converted into an enterprise as insecure as mining, labors which have ever constituted the principal honest means of livelihood for Mexicans. (P. 27.)

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In fine, and ever due, wholly or in part, to the atmosphere, the Mexican of the Central Plateau—and so much the less as the altitude of the region where he lives is greater—has never been able to count upon the future, either for his life, or for his health, or for his fields, or for his mines, or for his daily bread; and the apparent lack of uniformity in the phenomena of nature, experienced through generations, has developed in him finally a standard of judgment, composed of simple coexistences, which, in turn, has forged the fixed belief that all in nature is uncertain and capricious. As a logical consequence, there has arisen an unconquerable tendency toward the only manner in his power for reproducing in the same unpredictable form the contingencies of fortune and misfortune of life, so far at least as concerns wealth and misery—that is, to gaming; and thus may be explained the extent of this vice in Mexico. (P. 34.)

But gambling, on a large scale, was indulged by the soldiers of the Conquest, long before the climate had had time to operate upon them. Nor can Guerrero's suggestion be equally applicable to the high tableland of Mexico and the coast plains, and yet the fondness for gaming is as noticeable in Vera Cruz as in Mexico. Again, the prodigious

development of gambling in the United States during the last few years, until today the vice has as notable a hold on us as on the Mexicans, shows that some other cause must be assigned than the simple climatic conditions which he discusses—a cause more general and less simply physical.

In his discussion of "The Territory" Guerrero shows clearly that Spain's mode of administration, perpetuated by Mexico, was directly influenced by the topographic structure of the country. He brings out well why Mexico was unable to exert the coercion necessary to hold Texas in the union of Mexican states. It is curious that Mexico has not yet learned the lesson which he here teaches, and that she today, blind to her past history, encourages with government aid lines of railroad which are of no direct advantage to her, and the whole strategic value of which is in favor of the United States. It would be wise policy to tie Sonora and Sinaloa, always points of danger, to the national capital, rather than to connect them by their only highways to another governmental center.

Most interesting, and most sad, are Guerrero's descriptions of the classes that make up Mexican society. These are marvelously true and could be written only by a Mexican, though there are few Mexicans who could or would write them. Their nature is shown by the following lines, a part of his description of the lowest class:

A, (a). Unfortunate men and women who have no normal or certain means of subsistence; they live in the streets and sleep in public sleeping-places, crouched in the *portales*, in the shelters of doorways, amid the rubbish of buildings in construction, in some *meson* if they can pay for the space three or four centavos a night, or stowed away in the house of some *compadre* or friend. They are beggars, gutter snipes, paper-sellers, grease-buyers, rag-pickers, scrub-women, etc. With difficulty they earned twenty or thirty centavos daily; now they may receive more, but the general rise in prices leaves them in the same condition of misery. They are covered with rags, they scratch themselves constantly, in their tangled hair they carry the dust and mud of every quarter of the city. They never bathe themselves save when the rain drenches them, and their bare feet are cracked and calloused, and assume the color of the ground. In general, they do not attain to an old age, but to a precocious decrepitude, worn out by syphilis, misery, and drink.

The men and women of this class have completely lost modesty; their language is that of the drinking-house; they live in sexual promiscuity, get drunk daily, frequent the lowest *pulquerias* of the meanest quarters; they quarrel and are the chief causes of disorders; they form the ancient class of Mexican *leperos*; from their bosom the ranks of petty thieves and pickpockets are recruited, and they are the industrious plotters of important crimes. They

are insensible to moral suffering, and physical suffering pains them but little, and pleasures give them little joy. Venereal disease and abortion render the women of the group refractory to motherhood; paternity is impossible on account of the promiscuity in which they live; these two natural springs of altruism destroyed, they are indifferent to humane sentiments and egoistic in the animal fashion.

Everywhere they may be seen, the repulsive feature of our streets. In speaking they reveal a dwarfed intelligence, as sadly ruined by their life as is their body. Their ideas are rudimentary notions derived from the common talk of the streets, comments on public events—the escape of one criminal, the sentence of another, the deportation of their companions, the capture of some “crook.” They are godless, with feeble superstition regarding the saints depicted on their scapulars or the medal of the rosary, which they wear beneath their filthy shirt. Their number is enormous; they constitute the dregs of the laboring classes, and their presence betrays the vortices of vice, where the outcasts of civilization are dragged down. (Pp. 158–60.)

In the same way the whole fabric of Mexican society is analyzed. The author's characterization of foreign residents is interesting and, on the whole, little flattering. Curiously, while for the Americans whom he daily meets in Mexico he has little respect, Guerrero's admiration for our nation is high.

In the books dealing with “Atavisms” and “Creeds” many of the ills and bad conditions in Mexico are referred to these sources. From a dreadful list of cruel deeds by Mexicans it is deduced that the cruel nature of the old Aztecs is reasserting itself. From survivals of old pagan belief and practice within the Catholic church a similar atavism is claimed in religion. The church itself is blamed for much of present conditions. The results, political and social, of the half-century of almost constant revolution in Mexico are vigorously presented. All of this is done, from the point of view of description, in a masterly way, and everywhere one feels the intense earnestness and sincerity of the author. But everywhere one feels that events are referred to but partial causes, and that no great principles or laws are found. The book is full of suggestions and food for thought. It fails to group matter systematically. It is a series of brilliant essays, not a complete development of a problem. It sketches conditions, but points out no remedies. It is not absolutely pessimistic, but it touches on pessimism. If Mexicans are what they are from the simple action of the simple causes presented, the case is hopeless. If the climate makes them gamblers, if the topography involves non-government, if the Indian foundation means cruelty and superstition, all these faults will remain, because the

climate, the topography, and the Indian foundation remain, and will remain. But the problems are not so simple, nor readily referred to such simple agents. Gambling exists in other climes, non-government may be found on temperate plains, and cruelty and superstition occur in all mankind.

There has been some talk of an English translation of the book. It will not be understood by English readers, and will be particularly misjudged by all Americans save those who know Mexico sympathetically. In Mexico itself the book caused a sensation. For ten successive evenings the thinkers of the Mexican metropolis—literary men, teachers, students, public men, scientific workers—representing the different learned societies, gathered for its discussion, the author himself being present. At the close of this detailed examination the book was highly commended.

Guerrero comes of "Liberal" stock, and is himself of that political party. He is a clear thinker on public affairs, and in politics seeks to warn and direct. His journal, *La Republica*, was suppressed after fourteen numbers. In it he asserted purely Liberal ideas, warned against the dangers of revolution, and aimed to contribute to the solving of the most pressing political question in Mexico today—the presidential succession.

FREDERICK STARR.

Evolution of the Japanese. By SIDNEY L. GULICK, M.A., Missionary of the American Board in Japan. Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co. Pp. vi + 457.

THIS work presents the best description and the most searching analysis that has yet appeared of that unique ethnical phenomenon, the modern reconstruction of Japan. As description the work constitutes a very treasury of mental characterization so classified as to require nearly all of the thirty-seven chapters of the work. Herein the work is a match for the *Chinese Characteristics* by Arthur Smith, which supplies an exact anatomy of the Chinese mind. But, unlike Mr. Smith, our author had a host of previous writers to deal with; and these have been so criticised and so supplemented from first-hand knowledge that they are now superseded for a reader that can peruse but one work. A typical treatment is that of Japanese intellectuality, which is shown to compare fairly with that of Americans, while the fact that Japanese—in common with other orientals—had never developed an independent history or science is explained by the much